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INTELLIGENCE DATA BACKED

Top Defense Officials De- fend Shift In Estimates

Washington, March 27 (AP)—America's top defense officials have strongly defended shifting intelligence estimates as an effort to make the best use possible of information on Soviet military might.

Representative Mahon (D., Texas), chairman of the House Defense Appropriations subcommittee, warned, nevertheless, he would "not tolerate for one minute" any possibility that intelligence information had "been tailored for political purposes."

Highly censored testimony made public today by the subcommittee had Mahon and Representative Ford (R., Mich.) closely questioning the Secretary of Defense, Robert S. McNamara, and Gen. Lyman L. Lemnitzer, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, about charges intelligence information had been rigged.

Points To Estimates

Ford said Pentagon estimates appeared to show a "missile gap" compared with the Soviet Union one year and United States weapons superiority twelve months later.

"Could there be any possibility of them being rigged?" Mahon asked.

"I see no such possibility whatsoever," Lemnitzer replied. "I know the individuals involved and I know that they are not politically motivated. I am convinced of this, as a matter of fact."

Lemnitzer added, "The estimates that I have been presented are the estimates of the United States Intelligence Board, as they were last year, and as were those presented by my predecessors, and as will be those that will be presented by the services."

Projected Into Future

McNamara added that in areas not covered by this joint intelligence board he had relied on specialized military intelligence and projected it several years into the future.

"We just better use all the intelligence-gathering techniques we can, otherwise the reliability of these figures have little or no value as far as I am concerned," Ford said.

Later, Gen. Frederic H. Smith, Jr., Air Force vice chief of staff, was questioned about the change in estimates of Russian missile length.

He said the change in estimates did not reflect any lessening Soviet capacity.

"They had the capacity," Smith said. "It is a recognition that they did not do what our intelligence people thought they would do."